

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02
SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 SSO-00 NSCE-00
INRE-00 DODE-00 NEAE-00 PRS-01 /073 W
-----171214Z 037854 /50

O 171100Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5124
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
?USMISSION GENEVA 624

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CAIRO 8273

GENEVA PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY FOR ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR
SUBJECT: UPCOMING FAHMY/GROMYKO MEETING IN EUROPE

REF: (A) CAIRO 8159, (B) ALEXANDRIA 363

SUMMARY: FAHMY'S ANNOUNCEMENT MAY 14 HE WILL MEET
GROMYKO IN EUROPE JUNE 9 SUGGESTS POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT
SOVIET/EGYPTIAN RELATIONS. FAHMY DID NOT GIVE US
ADVANCE NOTICE OF SOVIET "INVITATION," PROBABLY
BECAUSE HE BELIEVES GOE SHOULD FOR PRACTICAL REASONS
NORMALIZE ITS RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AND SUSPECTS WE
MIGHT SEEK TO OBSTRUCT SUCH DEVELOPMENT. NEVERTHELESS,
FAHMY'S RETICENCE IS SLIGHTLY SURPRISING, ESPECIALLY
SINCE WE RECENTLY PROVIDED SUMMARY OF WHAT SECRETARY
WILL SAY TO GROMYKO IN GENEVA. CONCERN FOR NORMALIZATION

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RELATIONS FLOWS FROM FACT THAT GOE
HAVING DIFFICULTY FINDING ALTERNATE SPARE PARTS
SOURCES FOR ITS 90 PERCENT RUSSIAN ORIGIN MILITARY
INVENTORY. WITH ISRAELI/EGYPTIAN MILITARY GAP INCREASING
AND SADAT FAILURE THUS FAR GARNER US COMMITMENT PROVIDE
HARDWARE, RESULTANT PRESSURES FROM WITHIN EGYPTIAN
ARMED FORCES FOR NORMALIZATION ARE INTENSIFYING.

WE ARE MORE PUZZLED ABOUT APPARENT SOVIET CHANGE OF HEART. HAVING IGNORED REPEATED EGYPTIAN OVERTURES, AND THEN HAVING ENDURED FAHMY EFFORT PLAY LIBYAN DEMARCHE AS SOVIET POLITICAL DEFEAT, KREMLIN, NEVERTHELESS, SEEMS TO HAVE DECIDED GIVE IT ANOTHER TRY. END SUMMARY.

1. FAHMY'S ANNOUNCEMENT, MAY 14, THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR POLYAKOV HAD TWO DAYS BEFORE EXTENDED INVITATION TO HIM TO MEET WITH GROMYKO JUNE 9-10, SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE, RAISES VARIOUS QUESTIONS. IT ALSO SUGGESTS THAT, AFTER ROUGH SAILING WHICH EGYPTIAN/SOVIET RELATIONS HAVE HAD PAST YEAR OR SO, THEY MAY BE ENTERING SMOOTHER WATERS. WHAT WILL EMERGE FROM UPCOMING MEETING REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT GOE IS CLEARLY GRATIFIED BY SOVIET INVITATION. WE HEAR THAT WORD IS QUIETLY BEING PASSED TO JOURNALISTS TO REFRAIN FROM ATTACKING SOVIETS IN NEWS ARTICLE OR EDITORIALS, AND ANTI-SOVIET MEDIA COMMENTARY HAS SHARPLY DIMINISHED SINCE MAY 14. (MFA SOURCES HAD TOLD US SOVIETS WERE COMPLAINING BITTERLY ABOUT CAIRO MEDIA'S STRIDENT ANTI-SOVIET EDITORIALS.)

2. FAHMY GAVE US NO ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE MEETING, ALTHOUGH HE COULD HAVE DONE SO EVENING MAY 13 WHEN AMBASSADOR MET WITH HIM AFTER POLYAKOV'S CALL. ON CONTRARY, AS REPORTED CAIRO'S 8140, FAHMY WAS STILL ENGAGING IN PUGILISTICS ABOUT EARLIER SOVIET MEMORANDUM ON LIBYA. IRANIANS, SAUDIS AND OTHER
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MODERATE FRIENDS OF GOE, SOME OF WHOM TAXED FAHMY FOR FAILURE INFORM US IN ADVANCE ABOUT EARLIER SOFIA MEETING, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ASK SAME QUESTION AND BE DISTURBED WHEN THEY GET THE ANSWER. FAHMY'S FAILURE TO DO SO IS SLIGHTLY SURPRISING CONSIDERING THAT WE RECENTLY PROVIDED, AT HIS REQUEST, SUMMARY OF WHAT SECRETARY WILL SAY TO GROMYKO DURING UPCOMING GENEVA TALKS. FAHMY STILL OWES US HIS CONSIDERED ANSWER. HE WILL PROBABLY FUZZ THIS BY GIVING US PRIOR TO MEETING GENERALITIES ABOUT WHAT HE PLANS DISCUSS WITH GROMYKO, BUT FACT REMAINS THAT FAHMY HAS FOR PAST FEW MONTHS BEEN RELATIVELY UNCOMMUNICATIVE ABOUT EGYPTIAN/SOVIET RELATIONS--EXCEPT FOR HIS COMPLAINT ABOUT THE SOVIET MEMORANDUM. HIS RETICENCE IS PROBABLY DUE TO (A) HIS BELIEF THAT GOE SHOULD FOR PRACTICAL REASONS NORMALIZE ITS RELATIONS WITH USSR AND (B) A SUSPICION THAT WE MIGHT TRY TO OBSTRUCT ANY SUCH DEVELOPMENT. SADAT, WITH HIS CUSTOMARY CANDOR, TOLD VISITING NWC/ICAF

GROUP ABOUT SOVIET INVITATION ON VERY DAY FAHMY'S
ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE. HENCE, THIS CAN HARDLY
BE CONSTRUED AS ADVANCE NOTIFICATION. SENIOR
EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS TO WHOM WE HAVE TALKED, DOUBTLESS
REFLECTING FAHMY'S LINE, SEEK TO PROJECT INVITATION
AS SOVIET'S BOWING TO GOE'S HARDLINE STANCE AGAINST
MEMORANDUM ABOUT LIBYA. ONCE AGAIN, THEY ASSERT
WITH CONSIDERABLE SATISFACTION, SOVIETS HAVE BEEN
FORCED TO COME AROUND. SOVIETS NEED EGYPTIAN GOOD
WILL IF THEIR WEAKENED POSITION IN ME IS TO BE
PRESERVED. (ON OTHER HAND, AS OCCURRED AT TIME
GROMYKO/FAHMY MEETING IN SOFIA LAST NOVEMBER, SOVIET
EMBOFFS ARE PUTTING OUT STORY THAT EGYPT, NOT USSR,
ASKED FOR JUNE MEETING.) EVEN SADAT, WHOSE ANTI-
SOVIET PHOBIA SHOWS THROUGH WITH LITTLE PROMPTING,
SPOKE TO VISITING NWC/ICAF GROUP OF EGYPT'S DESIRE
FOR NORMAL RELATIONS WITH USSR PROVIDING SOVIETS
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"ACCEPT US AS WE ARE."

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O 171100Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5125

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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USMISSION GENEVA

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 CAIRO 8273

GENEVA PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY FOR ATHERTON

3. EGYPT'S INTEREST IN NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS, WHOM GOE HAS GLEEFULLY SLAPPED AROUND PAST YEAR, FLOWS FROM RECOGNITION OF IMMUTABLE FACT THAT EGYPTIAN MILITARY INVENTORY IS STILL 90 PERCENT RUSSIAN ORIGIN AND NEEDED SPARE PARTS CAN MOST QUICKLY BE OBTAINED FROM MOSCOW. ALTHOUGH GAMASY CLAIMS EGYPTIANS ARE DOING REASONABLY WELL IN FINDING ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF SPARE PARTS, EVEN HE ADMITS THAT THE TASK IS A DIFFICULT ONE. FROM ALL REPORTS, EGYPTIAN MILITARY CAPACITY IS BEING STEADILY DEGRADED DUE TO INADEQUATE SPARE PARTS FLOW. DIVERSIFICATION OF ARMS SUPPLIES, WHILE PROCEEDING SLOWLY DOES NOT MATCH ENORMOUS ISRAELI MILITARY BUILD UP OF PAST TWO YEARS DUE TO US MILITARY ASSISTANCE. SADAT'S RECENT WASHINGTON TRIP, WHILE POLITICALLY SUCCESSFUL, BROUGHT NO
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COMMITMENT OF USG WILLINGNESS PROVIDE HARDWARE. AS RESULT, PRESSURES HAVE INTENSIFIED WITHIN GOE, PARTICULARLY THE MILITARY, TO FIND SOME WAY TO NORMALIZE EGYPTIAN/SOVIET RELATIONS IN HOPES OF GETTING AT LEAST SPARE PARTS AND PERHAPS ARMS SUPPLY RESUMED. AS FAR AS GOE IS CONCERNED, IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE IF SUCH RESUMPTION IS DIRECT OR THROUGH EASTERN BLOC STATES, SUCH AS CZECHOSLOVAKIA. EGYPTIANS RECOGNIZE THAT RECENT CZECH DELIVERY OF SOME T-55 TANKS WAS ONLY POSSIBLE WITH SOVIET ACQUIESCENCE. ADDITIONALLY, WHILE DISCOUNTING AND EVEN SUSPECTING SOVIET ROLE IN ME PEACE PROCESS, GOE DOES NOT WANT SOVIET CO-CHAIRMAN TO BE ACTIVELY HOSTILE TO EGYPTIAN INTERESTS.

4. REASONS FOR APPARENT SOVIET TURNABOUT ARE MORE PUZZLING HERE. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, SOVIETS HAVE FOR SOME TIME BEEN PLAYING HARD TO GET IN FACE OF REPEATED EGYPTIAN OVERTURES. MOREOVER, EGYPTIANS PLAYED SOVIET MEMORANDUM ISSUE IN MANNER CONSCIOUSLY CALCULATED TO SUGGEST SOVIET POLITICAL DEFEAT AND POLYAKOV ADMITTED TO AMBASSADOR HIS GOVERNMENT'S ANNOYANCE WITH SADAT'S MAY 1 PUBLIC ATTACK AFTER INCIDENT PRESUMABLY SETTLED. WE KNOW FROM EAST EUROPEAN AND OTHER DIPLOMATS THAT POLYAKOV HAS FOR SOME TIME CLAIMED TO BE URGING MOSCOW SHOW GREATER WILLINGNESS ACCOMMODATE GOE, DESPITE DISTRUST OF SADAT AND EGYPT'S ANTI-SOVIET ANTICS. FROM HERE IT LOOKS AS IF KREMLIN HAS DECIDED

GIVE IT ANOTHER TRY. SOVIET DESIRE PLAY ACTIVE
ROLE IN ANY RESUMED GENEVA CONFERENCE WOULD SEEM
TO BE ONE POSSIBLE REASON, BUT THERE MAY BE OTHERS.
WE WOULD WELCOME EMBASSY MOSCOW'S ASSESSMENT AS TO
WHAT MAY HAVE CAUSED APPARENT SOVIET TURNABOUT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINISTERIAL MEETINGS, INFORMATION CONTROL
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 17-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CAIRO08273
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770174-1159
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770550/aaaabrbw.tel
Line Count: 229
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: bf35be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 CAIRO 8159, 77 ALEXANDRIA 363
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2496162
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UPCOMING FAHMY/GROMYKO MEETING IN EUROPE
TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR, (GROMYKO, ANDREY ANDREYEVICH), (FAHMY, ISMAIL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/bf35be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009